



## Eschatology – A Study of the End Times

### Lesson 13: The Beginning of the Tribulation, Part 2

#### Introduction

In our study so far, we have entered the future seven-year tribulation period of human history. Last time we considered an overview of the Day of the Lord and the revealing of the antichrist (i.e., the man of lawlessness). But for those who are in the tribulation period, how will they know that they are in the tribulation? In this lesson, we will consider the rebuilding of the temple and the signs of the times that will indicate to the people of that generation that they are in fact in the tribulation.

#### The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Temple<sup>1</sup>

Many who are familiar with Scripture understand the importance of the temple in the Bible. The temple had played a significant role among the people of God. This is because the temple mediates the presence of God to His people. In Israel's past, there have been several temples. In the future, it is also clear that there will also be another temple that will be rebuilt.

#### *The \_\_\_\_\_ Tabernacle*

The tabernacle was given by God in Israel's early history as a transportable temple. It travelled with the nation of Israel during the days of the wilderness wanderings and was the place where the nation of Israel would meet with God. Before the tabernacle, God would meet with His people at Mount Sinai from a distance (Exod. 19:10–25). God established the tabernacle so that He would be in the midst His people. The blueprint for the tabernacle was given by God in the book of Exodus (Exod. 25–31). The tabernacle was then constructed and completed (Exod. 35–40). With the completion of the tabernacle, the glory of God filled the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34–5). This indicated God's special presence with His people. The tabernacle was a divinely constructed place where God would temporarily dwell and meet with His people during the wilderness wandering.

#### \_\_\_\_\_ Temple

The tabernacle was only temporary in the plan of God as God always had a permanent location for it in His mind. The permanent location would be established when the nation of Israel was in

---

<sup>1</sup> The following is adapted from *The End Times in Chronological Order* by Ron Rhodes.

the promised land. According to Deuteronomy 12, God said that He would designate a particular place where He would dwell with His people in the promised land. This temple would be built on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

It was David's desires to build a house for God [i.e., the temple]. However, David was a man of bloodshed (1 Chron. 22:8). Therefore, Solomon was the king chosen by God to build Israel this dwelling place for God. David played a part in Solomon's temple by gathering enormous quantities of materials for the temple and providing encouragement and instructions for the building of the temple (1 Chron. 22:11–19). Once the temple was completed, the glory of God filled the temple as it did with the completion of the tabernacle (1 Kings 8).

However, due to Israel's sin and degradation, the nation would be judged. The kingdom would split, and both kingdoms would be destroyed. The culmination of God's judgement was the destruction of the temple. In Ezekiel 8–11, Ezekiel sees a vision of just how bad things had gotten. The vision ends with the glory of God departing from there.

#### \_\_\_\_\_ *Temple*

The next temple that was built was under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Following the seventy-year Babylonian captivity, Cyrus' decree allowed Israel to return back to their land. They were able to rebuild the temple at the same location. They started when they returned to the land, but lost momentum. They were encouraged by the prophets, and they eventually completed the temple by 515 B.C. This temple was much smaller and not as grand as Solomon's temple or even the one prophesized by Ezekiel. It had little of its former glory.

#### \_\_\_\_\_ *Temple*

The next temple was recognized as Herod's temple. It was not a new temple that was built. Rather, Herod enlarged the temple Zerubbabel completed in 515 B.C. Herod was ambitious to finish this project. He began this project in 19 B.C., and it was completed in A.D. 64. Herod's temple was the temple that was standing during the time of Jesus. Jesus was dedicated there according to the Jewish customs, and He attended this temple throughout His life and ministry. This temple was so magnificent that even the disciples point out the splendor of the temple in Mark 13:1.

However, this temple would be destroyed. In fact, Jesus predicted that this is what would happen, and it was fulfilled some 40 years later in A.D. 70. Under the leadership of the emperor's son, Titus, the Romans came and destroyed the temple and the city (Matt. 23:38–39; 24:2). This was judgment on the nation for the unbelief that was found in that generation of the Israelites, especially the hypocrisy imbedded in their religious leaders and their rejection of the Messiah (Matt. 23).

#### *The* \_\_\_\_\_ *Temple*

Since the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, there has not been a temple that has been rebuilt by the Jews. But there will be one rebuilt that will exist during the time of the seven-year tribulation period. Nowhere in Scripture is it explicitly stated that there will be a temple built

during the tribulation period, but there are passages that suggest that there will be another temple around during that time.

- Daniel 9:27
- Matthew 24:15–16

These passages indicate that a temple would have to exist for this abomination to occur. Therefore, since Herod's temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and another temple has not been rebuilt yet, this means, at the very minimum, there will be another temple that will be built and would exist during the time of the tribulation period for these prophecies to be fulfilled. This temple would have to be built at least before the mid-point of the tribulation period so that the abomination of desolation can occur at that point.

### *The \_\_\_\_\_ Temple*

According to the prophets, there will be a future millennial temple (Isa. 2:3; Ezekiel 40–48; Haggai 2:4–9; Zechariah 6:12). These passages show that there will be a temple during the reign of Christ, especially the vision given to Ezekiel. Some have said that this should be taken spiritually or in an allegorical sense. However, this is where our hermeneutic comes in. It's important to consider how the original readers would have interpreted such passages. They would have taken it literally. They would have expected a literal earthly temple that would be rebuilt, and it would be glorious. Plus, it is difficult to sort through why there would be so many details in Ezekiel 40-48 if it is not to be taken literally. Furthermore, since there has never been a temple built like this before, it will be built during the millennium.

### **The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Tribulation**

As we consider the tribulation period, the times will be vastly different from any other period in human history. Certain signs will take place as the tribulation period unfolds, which will make clear that a transition has taken place from the present age to the end times. The tribulation is described as something that “has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will” (Matt. 24:21).

Toward the end of Jesus's ministry on earth, the disciples asked Him specifically about the tribulation period: “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). Jesus then spoke of specific signs of the times that will emerge and intensify in the years before the second coming—that is, during the tribulation period (24:4-28).

### *\_\_\_\_\_ Signs*

First, there will be false messiahs (Matt. 24:4–5). This is nothing new. This has been the case all throughout church history and will continue into the tribulation period. Obviously, this will culminate with the antichrist, who will deceive many.

There will also be an increase in false prophets (Matthew 24:11, 24). Their goal will also be to mislead many. For such a time, discernment will be needed because deception during the tribulation period will reach epic proportions. Jesus is warning against such things because He

did not want His own to be led astray. That is why Jesus warns the faithful remnant, “Take heed that no one deceives you” (Matt. 24:4).

\_\_\_\_\_ *and* \_\_\_\_\_ *Signs*

There will also be a significant increase in wars and rumors of war (Matt. 24:6–7). The end-times will include warfare and threats of war on an extraordinary scale. Not only will there continually be wars but there will be constant talks of war. The topic of war will dominate the news and will be on people’s minds.

There will also be an increase in the frequency and intensity of earthquakes, famine, pestilence, and signs in the heavens in the future tribulation period (Matthew 24:7–8). Luke 21:11 adds more details, “There will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.” The signs from heaven could include cosmic disasters, such as asteroids, or debris from a comet that brings destruction to this world. Such things are described as “beginning of birth pangs.” Just as birth pains increase in frequency and intensity, so also will these signs become more and more catastrophic, leading into the great tribulation period.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Signs*

Prophetic Scripture speaks of a moral decline during this time period, and it will escalate to unprecedented levels. This in some sense also characterizes our present age. 2 Timothy 3:1–5 says that in the last days, people will love self, money, and pleasure. But there will be more of that in the tribulation period. There will be an increase in apostasy (Matthew 24:12, 37–39). As one writer says of those living in the end times, “people are far more interested in happiness than in holiness.” This is true now in our present times but will characterize the tribulation period.

### **Application**

1. Remember that God is Sovereign over Human History
2. Pursue Holiness